

Grand Avenue plan reduces median

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The state transportation department plans to reduce the median along Grand Avenue when it widens the roadway, a move that could spare Sun City homeowners and businesses major disruptions and, in some cases, a loss of property.

The Arizona Department of Transportation "always tries to impact the community as little as possible," said Tim Tait, ADOT community relations director. "On the south side of the roadway, there are a lot of businesses and residences that get rather close to the roadway. And on the north side, we're almost along the BNSF railway line."

Tait said ADOT is pleased that the area has sufficient space to widen the road without affecting the businesses or residents and their property.

The median is not being eliminated. There will still be about 23 feet of median remaining.

"This median area is important to provide safe passage for pedestrians across Grand Avenue; we are installing push-buttons in the medians to allow pedestrians to wait," said Tait.

That will not be the case in the future should Grand Avenue need further expansion.

"This will be the only time we can do this," Tait said.

ADOT has two efforts scheduled to ease traffic congestion that will be under way beginning next year. That will allow for expansion without widening intersections in the Sun Cities or encroaching on private property to the north or south of Grand Avenue.

The first project will be to upgrade Grand Avenue going in each direction from 83rd Avenue to Loop 303, making it a six-lane principal arterial street, Tait said.

That will begin in 2009 and is scheduled to be completed by 2011.

"We're waiting for the schedule, getting the contractor, and the project is ready to go," Tait said.

The other project will target areas along Grand Avenue from the Loop 101 to the Loop 303 and will draw on \$64 million from the 20-year voter-approved Regional Transportation Plan for unspecified improvements.

"It could include overpasses, intersection improvements or frontage road improvements," Tait said.

Gary Bourne, SCHOA transportation chairman, said he has not seen ADOT's plans and would reserve comment until he reviews them. Bourne has been an advocate for Grand Avenue grade separations, either raising or lowering the road at the 103rd and 107th Avenue intersections.

Tait said community members can voice their opinions on the projects at public forums beginning next week.

The first one will be from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. March 25 at Sundial Recreation Center, 14801 N. 103rd Ave., in Sun City.

There will be a second one that same day from 6 to 8 p.m. at El Mirage Elementary School, 13500 N. El Mirage Road in El Mirage.

The final one will be from 6 to 8 p.m. April 1 at Valley Vista High School, 15550 N. Parkview Place in Surprise.

"We're in the final stages right now working with local government and members of the community to determine what to prioritize," Tait said. "What is clear is the needs far override the financing allocated."

IF YOU GO

- **WHAT:** Public forum on Grand Avenue widening.
- **WHEN:** 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. March 25.
- **WHERE:** Sundial Recreation Center, 103rd Avenue and Boswell Boulevard in Sun City.